GREEN FOR ALL WHITE PAPER

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CLEAN WATER, STRONG COMMUNITIES

Translating the Value of Water Infrastructure Using Community Benefit Strategies

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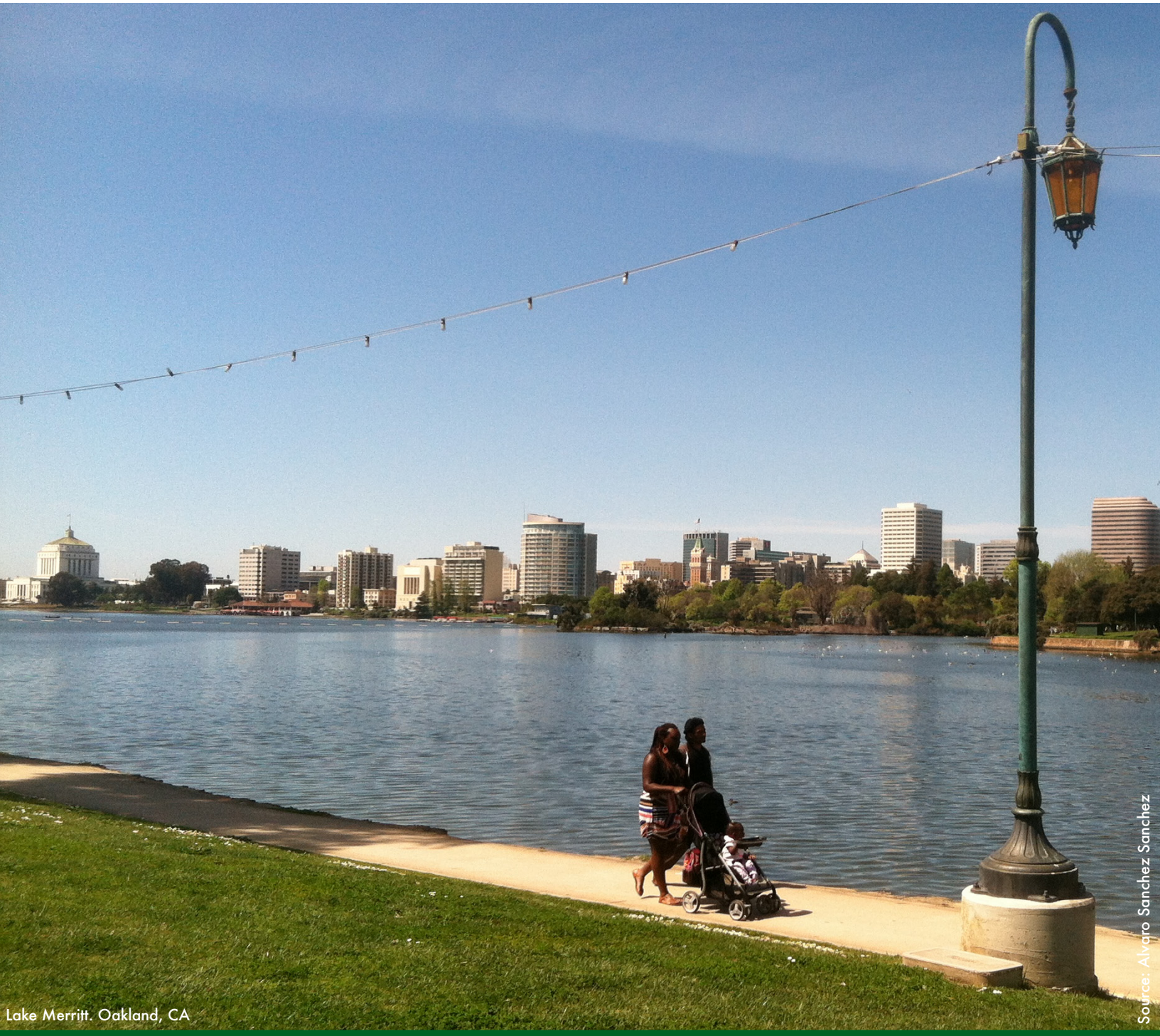

Lake Merritt. Oakland, CA

Source: Alvaro Sanchez Sanchez

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Written by Alvaro Sanchez Sanchez

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INTRODUCTION

Urban dwellers count on numerous agencies to make their cities safe and comfortable to live in. By far one of the most essential functions that public agencies perform is delivering safe and reliable water services.

Without water utilities, city residents would not be able to count on having clean water to drink, and businesses would not be able to count on reliable commercial water supplies. **We rely on water utilities to clean up and manage sewage and wastewater, and safeguard the health of our lakes, rivers, and natural resources by keeping them free of toxic pollution.** While the public may not think about it, residents and businesses interact with and depend upon the services, workers, and infrastructure of water utilities everyday.

But that is not all our water utilities do. They also serve as engines of economic development in their communities—employing hundreds, sometimes thousands of people directly or indirectly through their contracting processes for goods and services. For example, in San Francisco, California, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's $4.6 billion Water System Improvement Program has already created 33,000 jobs.[1] Water utilities make long-term infrastructure investments that support local and regional economies. **Their networks of pipes and tunnels are literally the foundation upon which cities are built.**

Yet our water infrastructure is essentially invisible and its value often goes unnoticed by consumers and ratepayers. Coupled with a dramatic decrease in federal support for water investments, this trend has resulted in unacceptable neglect of water infrastructure. In 2013, America's crumbling water infrastructure received a "D" grade from the American Society of Civil Engineers. **As our water systems age and decline, the health, safety, and prosperity of our communities are increasingly at risk.** Meanwhile, climate change, marked by heavy rains, extreme weather, and rising sea levels, magnifies the problem and perpetuates a water crisis we can no longer ignore.

To meet this challenge over the coming decades, cities will have to invest tremendous resources in enhancing stormwater systems, often through the use of green infrastructure solutions. As utilities

work to address pressing operational challenges, they also have the ability to transform the neighborhoods in which they operate and serve. Water utilities, which are responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of water systems, will need the approval of the public, political leaders, and other members of their communities in order to generate support for stormwater projects. **If they are to build the broad coalitions needed to drive increased infrastructure investments, utilities will have to effectively communicate and illustrate how stormwater investments provide a wealth of measurable and sustainable environmental, social, and economic benefits.**

This white paper focuses on one of the most promising strategies water utilities can use to develop broad public support: Embracing triple-bottom-line outcomes that deliver community benefits like jobs, business opportunities, green space, safer and more beautiful streets, and other local amenities. Selected policies and programs designed to catalyze community and economic development allow water utilities to show the public that they provide efficient and environmentally beneficial infrastructure that fosters local economic and social improvements.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT STRATEGIES

Community benefits strategies are initiatives by water utilities to produce a range of positive effects in the cities and neighborhoods where they invest capital and operations funds for water, wastewater, and stormwater projects. These strategies promote economic inclusion, create job opportunities, revitalize low-income neighborhoods, provide health benefits and recreation opportunities, and fight pollution and environmental degradation. This paper explores various examples of community benefits strategies that are already working throughout the United States—from an initiative by D.C. Water to hire local residents, to a policy from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission directing the utility to be good neighbor, to workforce development and community benefits agreements in cities like Portland, Oregon and Los Angeles, California.

STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE REVENUE CHALLENGES

America's basic water infrastructure is crumbling. Sewage overflows into our rivers and streams put us all at risk of contamination from bacteria, parasites, viruses, and chemicals. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), each year there are between 23,000 and 75,000 sanitary sewer overflows in this country and 3.5 million Americans get sick just from swimming in polluted water.[2] Forty percent of our lakes and rivers are too contaminated to support recreational activities and aquatic life.[3] At the same time, floods and other climate-related disasters, which current water infrastructure cannot withstand, put us at risk for loss of human life, damage to property, and massive

repair and reconstruction costs. In some parts of the U.S., cities also need to find solutions to conserve clean water because they face water shortages, even as some six billion gallons of clean drinking water per day are wasted nationally because of losses caused by decaying or outdated infrastructure.[4] Ensuring that we have adequate and safe water, according to the EPA, "underpins the nation's health, economy, security, and ecology."[5]

In order to protect public health, it is essential that we upgrade and repair the nation's stormwater infrastructure. But financing this work in an era of scarce resources is challenging and can be politically treacherous. In many of our larger, older cities, stormwater infrastructure systems were built over a century ago. Bringing these water systems into a state of good repair will require a minimum of $188.4 billion of investment.[6] Meanwhile, diminishing state and federal funding for infrastructure leaves water utilities increasingly reliant on their rate base to fund capital projects. This task is becoming increasingly difficult, as there is a lack of public and political will to raise rates sufficiently to fully invest in stormwater systems.

This fact is clearly demonstrated by the mounting opposition to stormwater fees in some areas of the country, which threatens efforts to clean up our water. The anti-tax movement has effectively lobbied against stormwater fees by using messages that link them to an unfair "tax on rain." The anti-stormwater fee movement has been bolstered as churches, non-profits, and school districts join in opposing stormwater fees.[7] Their vocal and well-organized efforts represent a formidable political challenge for any official advocating increased funding for stormwater infrastructure upgrades. Stormwater fees have a good track record of withstanding legal challenges. However, several recent court decisions have invalidated the collection of stormwater fees, forcing those communities to go back to the drawing board to find a financing mechanism for their stormwater work.[8]

Despite these challenges, city officials must still find public and private financing mechanisms to make the necessary stormwater repairs in order to comply with the Clean Water Act and to remain in good standing with the EPA. Complying with the Clean Water Act is not negotiable—municipalities that fail to do so face severe penalties from the federal government. **Therefore it is imperative that water utilities begin to build broad constituencies of support for stormwater infrastructure. Each year, utilities have less access to federal resources for upgrading our stormwater infrastructure. Community benefits strategies that produce environmental, social, and economic gains are critical tools that can be used to build public support for projects linked to rate increases.** Cities that anticipate and proactively address public reluctance to use or pay for new or improved infrastructure will be far better positioned than cities that fail to address this challenge. Promoting stormwater infrastructure solely through an environmental and water quality lens dramatically, and unnecessarily, limits the pool of likely stormwater infrastructure supporters.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE RISING POTENTIAL

One way that cities throughout the U.S. are addressing challenges associated with stormwater management is by installing green infrastructure such as permeable pavement, rain gardens, constructed wetlands, bioswales, and green roofs. Green infrastructure reduces pollutants, protects groundwater, and improves air quality. Green infrastructure, while preventing stormwater overflows and reducing polluted runoff to rivers and lakes, is also a more cost-effective solution for cities than traditional infrastructure; it increases property values, beautifies urban areas, reduces heat island effects, promotes environmental awareness through publicly visible projects, offers a wide range of solutions to climate change effects.[9] Some cities, like San Francisco and Los Angeles, are pursuing green infrastructure solutions as stormwater management alternatives. Other U.S. cities are installing green infrastructure to comply with the EPA's enforcement of Clean Water Act standards, cities like Dallas, Cincinnati, Seattle, and Philadelphia have budgeted for green infrastructure installation and upkeep in the years to come. The amount of money that cities will spend on green infrastructure ranges from $400,000 in places like Louisville, KY, to $2.5 billion in Philadelphia, PA and $1.6 billion in New York City, NY.[10]

The table below provides an overview of some locations that will be investing in green infrastructure. Our report, Water Works, done in collaboration with American Rivers and the Economic Policy Institute, calculates that the U.S. as a whole would need to invest approximately $188.4 billion over the next five years to make its water systems safe and reliable, and the list of cities pursuing green infrastructure options continues to grow.[11]

Table 1: Planned Investments in Green Infrastructure[12]

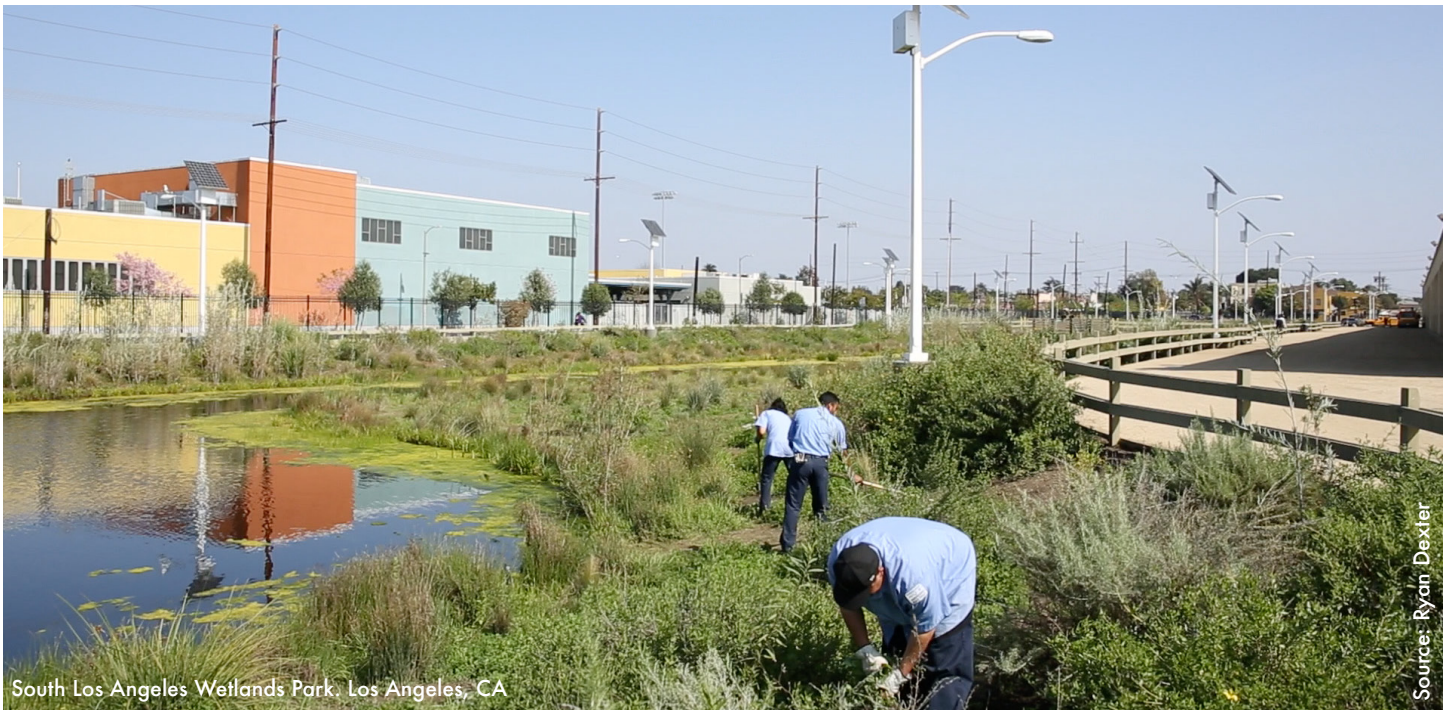
Location	Investment	Estimated Year of Completion
Washington, D.C.	$2.6 billion	2023
Philadelphia, PA.	$2.5 billion	2038
New York City, NY.	$1.6 billion	2033
Milwaukee, WI.	$1.3 billion	2035
Los Angeles, CA.	$200 million	2015
Onondaga County, NY.	$87 million	2018
Kansas City, MO.	$78 million	2025
Portland, OR.	$68 million	2013
Detroit, MI.	$50 million	2029
North East Ohio, OH.	$42 million	2020
Seattle, WA.	$30 million	2018

COMMUNITY BENEFIT STRATEGIES TRANSLATE THE VALUE OF WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Integrating community benefits strategies into stormwater infrastructure will result in increased support for these investments. This is particularly true for green infrastructure investments, because the economic, environmental, and social outcomes that are possible will garner support from a broad spectrum of stakeholders who have different priorities and values. Directing likely supporters to consider the broad range of stormwater infrastructure's economic and social benefits and using community benefits strategies to deliver results will galvanize support among stakeholders who do not typically prioritize water issues.

For example, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a grassroots effort led by Pittsburgh United to incorporate green infrastructure into The Allegheny County Sanitary Authority's (ALCOSAN) Wet Weather Plan successfully built a diverse coalition of over 55 stakeholder groups by highlighting the multiple benefits achieved through green infrastructure investments.[13] Their efforts contributed to EPA's recent announcement that ALCOSAN must work on a new plan to meet the requirements of a 2008 consent decree and EPA stated their willingness to consider a phased approach to allow for green Infrastructure and other flow reduction elements to be incorporated into the Wet Weather Plan.[14]

Managing stormwater is a responsibility usually assigned to stormwater utilities or water departments. As inadequacies of water systems have become clear over time, these utilities have begun exploring and investing in system upgrades, including green infrastructure. Now utilities have a number of compelling reasons to pursue community benefits strategies in tandem with those infrastructure investments.



South Los Angeles Wetlands Park, Los Angeles, CA

Source: Ryan Dexter

First, ratepayers will closely scrutinize the projects that water utilities install using public funds. This is particularly true given that cities throughout the U.S. will have no choice but to increase taxes and fees to upgrade stormwater infrastructure because federal and state funds have dramatically decreased. In fact, the Water Environment Federation estimates that currently, about ninety-eight percent of the capital investments for wastewater infrastructure are borne by state and local governments.[15] Water utilities must convince the public that stormwater infrastructure is an imperative and valuable public works investment. They are more likely to succeed if they can point to an array of advantages resulting from infrastructure investments. When cities can show, in measurable terms, how money spent on infrastructure addresses several community issues at the same time – like floods, water and air pollution, high unemployment, and local business failures – those successes will resonate with the public.

Second, public agencies strive to extract the greatest benefit possible from public funds. Cities are particularly motivated at present to squeeze maximum value out of each dollar they spend because budgets are tight. For cities across the U.S. "recession-mindedness is still standard operating procedure," as a response to the economic crisis, and cities are forced to handle challenges using smaller budgets than before.[16] Cities that pursue community benefit strategies are able to extract more value out of every dollar because they advance social, economic, and environmental goals at the same time. Thus, when cities invest in infrastructure, they provide environmental benefits to their communities. If these same cities also implement local hiring strategies during the installation and maintenance of stormwater infrastructure, they concurrently advance social goals because such strategies help connect targeted local residents to quality jobs. Hiring local, targeted workers stimulates the local economy because those workers are more likely to spend their income locally, thus creating a cycle of benefits.[17]

In addition, public agencies, as a whole, by virtue of their core purpose, operate to support and provide for the general welfare of their communities including their social, environmental, and economic needs. Water utilities that are responsible for addressing problems with stormwater infrastructure may not be specifically tasked with addressing local problems like unemployment, neighborhood blight, or challenges faced by marginalized groups. Nevertheless, these agencies do function as component parts of a government structure, and governments do have a duty to provide for the public good. Local governments are charged with tasks like creating jobs, spurring economic development, addressing social ills, and protecting the environment through their agencies, including water utilities. Stormwater infrastructure projects can have positive impacts on issues of unemployment or neighborhood blight—but only when these projects are implemented within a community benefits framework. By embedding community benefits, water utilities build support for their work among non-traditional partners and among ratepayers concerned with the efficient and good use of public funds.

When water utilities successfully deliver multiple-benefits through their projects and can point to an array of public benefits achieved, they are able to make a strong case that they are maximizing the value of public funds. Strong communication about the benefits produced by stormwater projects can create a clear nexus between infrastructure investments and community development. For example, when workers are paid more under a community benefits strategy, turnover rates will decrease, levels of worker reliability will increase, and work quality will improve.[18] In addition, a community benefits strategy will champion contractors who offer fair wages, quality training, and a strong safety record – and will limit reliance on contractors who skimp on wages, benefits, training, and safety. Using a community benefits strategy also means that cities will be less likely to partner with contractors who cut corners in performance, leaving cities to repair and replace projects after the contractors have been paid and moved on to their next opportunity.

Promoting community benefits also fosters competition among reliable bidders, boosting standards for wages and working conditions. Such improvements are important, because employees who receive fair wages and benefits are less likely to rely on costly social benefits provided by cities for food, housing, and health care.[19] When the sole goal of contractors is to keep costs low, they are not motivated to redirect dollars back to the local economy or to transition people in underrepresented groups into career pathways. Shortsighted procurement policies that use price as the sole factor considered in the selection of contractors limit an agency's ability to maximize the impact of public dollars. Best-value-contracting where price and other key factors, like apprenticeship utilization, can be considered in the selection of contractors offers an alternative to lowest-bid-contracting models.[20] When cities rely on firms that do not pursue community benefits for infrastructure installation and maintenance, they miss opportunities to maximize the use of public dollars at a time when city budgets are tight.[21]

Finally, cities that pursue community benefits strategies will distinguish themselves by implementing innovative, comprehensive solutions to problems that their communities face. By pursuing infrastructure investments within a community benefits framework, these leading cities will attract recognition and have greater opportunities to develop partnerships for advancing their work. By addressing multiple issues and developing strategic partnerships, utilities may be able to leverage other resources for employment and training services or for business development. Cities that take the lead will also set an example for other cities that face similar challenges.

MULTIPLE APPROACHES TO DELIVERING COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Delivering a range of community benefits through infrastructure projects does not happen automatically. It is absolutely necessary to take concerted and coordinated actions to maximize potential benefits from investments in infrastructure. However, there is no single prescribed way to deliver community benefits from infrastructure projects. Cities throughout the U.S. are exploring multiple ways to ensure that their projects deliver more than just stormwater infrastructure upgrades to their local communities.

There are a number of ways that water utilities are currently delivering multiple benefits from their investments in stormwater infrastructure. These can be grouped into three categories: A stand-alone policy that seeks to advance social and economic inclusion; a comprehensive strategy that essentially bakes community benefits into the business model of the utility; and contractual agreements with embedded community benefit strategies. Any of these approaches shows that stormwater utility leaders intend to address community issues as a component of delivering infrastructure projects. They also recognize the potential benefit to their operations from being seen as organizations that deliver economic and social benefits in addition to their environmental contributions.

Leadership Delivering Community Benefits from Infrastructure Investments –

The role that leadership plays in delivering community benefits from investments in infrastructure cannot be understated. Changing the paradigm of water utility work from one that focuses on delivering efficient and safe water services to one that additionally delivers community benefits through investments requires committed and visionary leadership. The examples described in the following pages come from utilities with this type of leadership. Leaders like George Hawkins (General Manager, DC Water), Tony Parrott (Executive Director, Metropolitan Sewage District of Greater Cincinnati), Harlan Kelly Jr. (General Manager, SFPUC), Enrique Zaldivar (Director, Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation), Kevin Shafer (Executive Director, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District), and Howard Neukrug (Commissioner, Philadelphia Water Department), among others, are creating the blue print for the water utility of the 21st century; a utility that is much more connected to its local community via its employees, its services, and its role in delivering positive economic and social outcomes.

Stand-Alone Polices That Advance Social and Economic Inclusion –

Cities throughout the U.S. have attempted to extend economic opportunity to underrepresented communities using Minority and Women Owned Business (MWBE) participation goals or targeted and local hiring policies. These initiatives leverage public funds to create positive economic inroads in communities faced with high unemployment rates. For example, D.C. Water's local hiring initiative,

D.C. Water Works, is a multi-pronged initiative to boost local hiring on projects. The objectives of the program are to advertise D.C. Water jobs to local residents, to collaborate with local job training and apprenticeship programs, and to coordinate an incentive-based program to encourage D.C. Water contractors to interview and hire local residents.[22] This multifaceted strategy works to explicitly direct an economic benefit to local communities, who will finance infrastructure work through fees and are directly affected by work taking place in their neighborhoods.[23]

In another example of using a stand-alone policy approach, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) has established a workforce development program to maximize the local economic benefits in the region. Through its Workforce Training & Business Development program, the Sewerage District is taking a leadership role to more fully affect not only its own diversity goals, but also the larger issues of poverty. The Sewerage District is achieving this by training and retaining more local residents, minorities, and women as apprentices and construction managers and by increasing the capacity of small, minority, and women-owned businesses to better compete and participate in construction and engineering projects. It is also working to increase the number of minorities and women in management and leadership positions with its contractors and consultants, while targeting talented students from the Sewer Service Area and matching them through internships with Milwaukee area contractors and consultants.[24]

Comprehensive Strategies That "Bake-In" Community Benefits –

Implementing one or a few policies that guide the utility's business practices to generate community benefits from infrastructure projects is gaining recognition as good business practice. However, some utilities are taking things one step further. Several are examining their entire portfolio of work and analyzing it within a framework that promotes community benefits. This new strategy holds great promise and can potentially change the paradigm of how water utilities are perceived in the communities in which they work.

The Metropolitan Sewage District of Greater Cincinnati (MSDGC) is leading a major initiative titled Project Groundwork, which is designed to leverage stormwater management projects to generate economic, environmental, and social benefits for Hamilton County, and to revitalize the economy through the creation of jobs and growth opportunities for local businesses.[25] With Project Groundwork, the Sewage District engages local ratepayers by highlighting the multiple benefits that will be achieved through their investments, and by making a direct connection between stormwater infrastructure and local economic and community development. This strategy exponentially increases the reach and impact of the District's work in and around greater Cincinnati. It also helps the District engage with communities that are not traditionally involved in their work, while forging strong partnerships that support successful delivery of the District's projects.

Similarly, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) has adopted both an Environmental Justice Policy and a Community Benefits Policy that guide the Agency's efforts to be a "good neighbor" to all whose lives and neighborhoods are affected by the operation of its water, power, and wastewater enterprises. The Commission believes that by balancing economic, environmental, and social equity goals, it can serve as a catalyst for expanding economic inclusion, creating job opportunities, and revitalizing low-income neighborhoods in which the SFPUC works.[26] A key component of implementing these policies is to partner with professional service firms that do business with the Commission. To date, nineteen professional service firms have included community benefits commitments as part of their contracts with the Commission. This has leveraged nearly $5 million in private sector investments in the form of direct financial contributions, volunteer hours, and in-kind donations to local nonprofits, small businesses, and schools.[27]

Contractual Agreements With Embedded Community Benefit Strategies–

Embedding a community benefits framework into the business model of water utilities promises to be the most effective way to deliver maximum positive outcomes from infrastructure work. One of the best ways to embed community benefits into the business practices of water utilities is by incorporating community benefits language into the contracts signed for infrastructure projects. Negotiated, legally binding contracts setting forth a range of benefits, workplace conditions and rules, and compensation structure such as Community Benefits Agreements, Community Workforce Agreements, and Project Labor Agreements are examples of contractual agreements that can guide benefits to underserved communities. Procurement policies are also a proven method of governing sizeable construction projects with community benefits strategies.

In Portland, Oregon, the Metropolitan Alliance for Workforce Equity (MAWE), a coalition of community, labor, business and equity partners, successfully established a Community Benefits Agreement that will govern two Portland Water Bureau projects and will serve as pilots for applying Community Benefits Agreements to future projects.[28] The Community Benefits proposal is a three-pronged plan that includes:

- Concentrated efforts to promote inclusion, improve workforce diversity, increase utilization of disadvantaged businesses, and ensure workers are treated fairly and paid high-road wages;
- Establishment of funds to support outreach, training, oversight and technical assistance for disadvantaged contractors; and
- Continuous oversight and improvement by a balanced Labor-Management-Community Committee representative of all CBA stakeholders. MAWE truly walks the talk, and has elevated and valued community and disadvantaged contractor participation in this effort.

This strategy ensures that vulnerable residents in Portland benefit economically from infrastructure projects that are funded in large part by the fees they pay.

THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIPS IN IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY BENEFIT STRATEGIES

Developing supportive partnerships with non-traditional stakeholders is one of the most compelling reasons for water utilities to use a community benefits framework to guide their stormwater infrastructure work. In a time when it is difficult for utilities to do the work they are required to do without the support of broad coalitions, developing solid partnerships with businesses, labor, grassroots organizations, community advocates, elected officials and others gives utilities an advantage. Partnerships in this context—defined as mutually beneficial relationships in which the utility gains support for stormwater infrastructure upgrades, and those supporting stormwater infrastructure upgrades see benefits to their work and goals—are key.

For example, the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia has long advocated for the use of green infrastructure. In 2013, the group launched Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Partners, an initiative to advance the region's green infrastructure innovation, industry, and related businesses. Through this initiative, the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) can now develop partnerships with local businesses and individuals who understand the value of stormwater infrastructure and see a concrete benefit from supporting spending on it. The GSI Partners have quarterly meetings, networking opportunities, educational workshops, and working committees, all focused on growing private sector opportunities in green infrastructure. The GSI Partners also have funding to provide training and continuing education opportunities for employers and their employees to help build capacity and remain competitive. The GSI Partners are a resource for landowners, property owners, and developers who need to find qualified local businesses to contract with so they can meet PWD's stormwater regulations. This partnership is critical, especially given that businesses sometimes represent the strongest opposition to new stormwater rate structures that are based on impervious surfaces.[29]

Urban Outfitters Headquarters. Philadelphia, PA

Source: Shift Design

Another way in which utilities can build solid partnerships with individuals and organizations is by extending work opportunities directly to community members. As we reported in Staying Green and Growing Jobs: Green Infrastructure Operations and Maintenance as Career Pathway Stepping Stones, youth corps groups and workforce development programs throughout the country are gradually gaining access to contracts that help them hire low-income residents to perform green infrastructure work.[30] One example of work these organizations perform is outreach to the local community to educate it on green infrastructure projects in their community. By employing local residents, utilities not only help to reduce unemployment—they also help to catalyze environmental stewardship among communities that have been traditionally left out of sustainability movements. This is a critical first step in securing support for stormwater infrastructure work.

In some cases, catalyzing environmental stewardship among low-income workers leads to career exploration in the water sustainability field, and can help utilities address workforce shortages. Workforce development is particularly important to utilities that will face significant turnover as current employees prepare to retire in the coming years, making succession planning of critical concern.

Attracting, training, and retaining new employees for technical, managerial, and construction positions in order to deliver quality public works projects remains a central priority and concern. As the current workforce retires, water utilities have an opportunity to cultivate the workforce of the future—one that is representative of the communities the agencies serve. Already, initiatives in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Colorado are helping identify and train young residents for work in the water sustainability field. Through these initiatives, young residents gain technical and transferable skills, work experience, and support in their transitions into the water utility workforce.[31] Equally important to the utilities, these local workers become evangelists for utilities within their communities—they will help inform and educate local ratepayers about the value of infrastructure investments. Such is the case of the Onondaga EarthCorps, where corps members have been hired to perform operations and maintenance of green infrastructure projects in the Syracuse area but also perform education and outreach to the local community about the value of green infrastructure projects.

ELEVATING THE PROFILE OF WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

By highlighting community benefits, utilities can dramatically increase the visibility of their work and demonstrate the value of their services to the public, elected officials, and important stakeholders. For example, the Los Angeles Department of Public Works Bureau of Contract Administration compiles and releases detailed reports on Department of Water and Power (LADWP) projects governed by Project Labor Agreements.[32] These reports show that LADWP is succeeding in meeting local hire, apprentice, and disadvantaged worker participation goals. Moreover, these reports clearly demonstrate the additional community benefits achieved through infrastructure projects, especially to decision makers and workforce development advocates.[33] Using this information helps the utility gain political support for its work from stakeholders who focus on local economic development.

Green infrastructure projects literally unmask the work of water utilities and put it front and center. This is especially true in communities with vacant and blighted lots and with limited access to green spaces. Green infrastructure allows utilities to provide neighborhood amenities such as parks, walkable streets, bike lanes, and trees to areas with scare amenities, while simultaneously addressing issues of blight, flooding, and crime. Utilities can show ratepayers green infrastructure projects in their neighborhoods in order to demonstrate the multiple benefits achieved through their work. The Save The Rain Program in Onondaga County has done an exemplary job of this, through a public relations campaign that weaves traditional and green infrastructure projects into many aspects of everyday life in the county. The program highlights and promotes more than one hundred community stormwater projects via tours, presentations, brochures, reports, photos, and videos. It also holds an annual one-day Water Fair used to educate and showcase projects and community partnerships.[34]

Fourth Ward Park. Atlanta, GA

Source: Randa2e

CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, stormwater projects throughout the country are transforming communities. A street scape project in Los Angeles has used green infrastructure to solve persistent flooding problems and bring sidewalks to a working class neighborhood. In Philadelphia, one project has transformed a 20-acre swath of blighted land in a low-income neighborhood into a hub that includes a school, a park, and other neighborhood amenities. Atlanta is building a massive 22-mile corridor that circles the city and connects neighborhoods with transit, parks, multi-use trails and new development. All across the country, utilities like these are making their communities healthier, safer, and more prosperous.

The Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation's South L.A. Wetlands Park is a great example of a project where the utility has been able to leverage its investments to create broader community benefits. The wetlands park provides a critical urban stormwater management function. At the same time, it has repurposed a former bus and rail yard, turning it into a new public green space in a park-poor area of the city. The project has water quality at its core, but it also provides job creation and economic opportunity, as many of the workers came from the neighborhood. It is also creating new recreational opportunities—including walking trails, wildlife habitat, and increased access to nature and water.[35] These projects showcase the transformative power of stormwater infrastructure. They also provide a model for how to translate the value of infrastructure to local residents.

The substantial investments that cities will be making to address water system failings will be more effective and efficient if water utilities embrace community benefits strategies than if they take a more narrow view of their roles. Water utilities have a unique opportunity to leverage their positions to create jobs, strengthen local economies, and develop more vibrant communities—all while cultivating broad community support for their current and future work.

South Los Angeles Wetlands Park. Los Angeles, CA

Source: Ryan Dexter

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16 Kurtzleben, Danielle, "Budget Woes Strike Most Major U.S. Cities," U.S. News & World Report, Jul 22, 2011.

17 Stratus Consulting, "A Triple Bottom Line Assessment of Traditional and Green Infrastructure Options for Controlling CSO Events in Philadelphia's Watersheds" (2009)

18 See Sonn and Gebreselassie, p.4, high-road contractors that "comply with workplace laws and provide quality training, wages and benefits typically have better skilled and more productive workforces that increase the quality of public construction work, with resulting savings for the taxpayers."

19 A study of Philadelphia's traditional and green infrastructure options for controlling CSO events found that hiring an unemployed person to do green infrastructure results in an estimated $10,000 per person per year in avoided societal costs of poverty. See more at Stratus Consulting, "A Triple Bottom Line Assessment of Traditional and Green Infrastructure Options for Controlling CSO Events in Philadelphia's Watersheds" (2009).

20 For further information on best-value-contracting, see MnDOT . MnDOT Office of Construction and Innovative Contracting. Best Value Procurement Manual. Minnesota : , 2012. Web. <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/stateaid/projectdelivery/bid/bv/best-value-guide-final-march2012.pdf>.

21 For further discussion of the drawbacks of low-road, short-term models of economic development, see Schweke, Bill, A Progressive Economic Development Agenda for Shared Prosperity, Center for Economic Development, June 2006.

22 For additional information see: http://www.dcwater.com/employment/water_works.cfm

23 Good Jobs First's report "Sink or Swim" argues that DC Water should prioritize delivering economic relief via jobs and business opportunities to low-income communities in the DC area to mitigate the negative effects of what they describe as a regressive water fee structure. See Cafcas, Thomas. "Sink or Swim? Who will pay and who will benefit from DC Water's $2.6 billion Clean Rivers Project?" Good Jobs First. June 2013

24 For additional information see: http://www.mmsd.com/WorkforceTraining.aspx

25 For additional information see: http://projectgroundwork.org/

26 San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. "Community Benefits Program: Creating Sustainable and Equitable Communities." (SFPUC publication) San Francisco, CA. 2013

27 National Utilities Convening Framing Paper. Washington DC, October 20th 2013.

28 For additional information see: http://www.cbanw.org/cba-in-action/

29 Stormwater fee structures throughout the country are being set based on the square footage of impervious surfaces, which often results in big increases for businesses, especially big box retailers or auto dealers with large parking lots. Many communities offer green infrastructure incentives to these businesses as a method for reducing stormwater fees but many businesses choose to oppose stormwater fees instead of using green infrastructure incentives.

30 Sever organizations are profiled in this report and perform duties such as, education and outreach, landscape maintenance, debris removal, systems monitoring, rain-barrel installation, urban forestry work, among others. For additional information on green infrastructure operations and maintenance jobs see: Hays, Quinn, Sanchez Sanchez. Staying Green And Growing Jobs: Green Infrastructure Operations and Maintenance as Career Pathway Stepping Stones. Green For All and American Rivers. April 2013.

31 For additional information see: http://www.generationwater.org/, http://www.milehighyouthcorps.org/index.php, http://powercorpsphl.org/

32 Historically Project Labor Agreements have served in assisting the awarding agencies in providing on time, conflict involvement free project completions. The Agreements help reduce overall construction costs by ensuring that the work on a covered project will be completed efficiently, cooperatively, economically and without interruption. They have also served in the best interest of public safety, community involvement and participation through local hiring and apprenticeship training. Under a Project Labor Agreement, contractors and subcontractors are required to comply with all applicable federal and state laws, ordinances and regulations requiring the payment of prevailing wages. See http://bca.lacity.org/index.cfm?nxt_body=local_hiring.cfm

33 Reports include data on local worker utilization, apprentice utilization, and disadvantaged worker utilization. See: http://bca.lacity.org/index.cfm?nxt=dpw&nxt_body=dpw.cfm

34 The 2013 Clean Water Fair brought together over 400 residents in the Syracuse area. See http://savetherain.us/2013fair/

35 National Utilities Convening Framing Paper. Washington DC, October 20th 2013.